Amendments To The Claims:

Claims 1-33 (***Canceled***)

Claim 34. (***Currently Amended***) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements, each annular element comprising a plurality of interconnected struts and having a compressed state and an expanded state; and at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state, the taper defining a relative difference in diameter between a portion of the stent closer to the first end and a portion of the stent closer to the second end, at least some of the taper traversing between an annular element with a greatest tapered diameter and an annular element having a narrowest tapered diameter, at least some of the taper traversing a portion of the longitudinal length where the struts of the annular elements are of substantially equal width; wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility and have different diameters, wherein the annular element having the greatest tapered diameter has no more interconnected struts than the annular element having the narrowest tapered diameter; and wherein the stent is cut from a tube.

Claim 35. (***Previously Presented***) The stent of claim 34, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 36. (***Cancelled***)

Claim 37. (***Previously Presented***) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 38. (***Cancelled***)

Claim 39. (***Cancelled***)

Claim 40. (***Cancelled***)

Claim 41. (***Cancelled***)

Claim 42. (***Currently Amended***) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a

longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected annular elements comprising a plurality of interconnected struts, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; wherein at least a portion of the stent has

a tapered configuration in the expanded state;

the tapered configuration defining a difference in diameter between a portion of the stent closer to the first end and a portion of the stent closer to the second end, at least some of the tapered configuration occurring between an annular element having a greatest tapered diameter and an annular element having a narrowest tapered diameter at least some of the tapered configuration occurring along a portion of the longitudinal length where the struts of the annular elements are of substantially equal width;

wherein the annular element with the greatest tapered diameter has no more interconnected struts than the annular element with the narrowest tapered diameter;

and wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility and have different diameters;

and wherein the stent is formed from a single piece of material

Claim 43. (***Previously Presented***) The stent of claim 42, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration.

Claim 44. (***Previously Presented***) The stent of claim 43, wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 45. (***Previously Presented***) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 46. (***Cancelled***)

Claim 47. (***Currently Amended***) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements comprising interconnected struts, the plurality of annular elements including an end-most annular element at the first end and an end-most annular element at the second end, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and

at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state;
the tapered configuration defining a change in diameter between a portion of the stent closer to the first end and a portion of the stent closer to the second end,
at least some of the tapered configuration occurring between an annular element having a greatest tapered diameter and an annular element having a narrowest tapered diameter, at least some of the tapered configuration occurring along a portion of the longitudinal length where the struts of the annular elements are of substantially equal width;
wherein the annular element with the greatest tapered diameter has no more interconnected struts than the annular element with the narrowest tapered diameter; and
wherein the end-most annular element at the first end has a different degree of flexibility and has a different diameter than the end-most annular element at the second end; and wherein the stent is formed from a tube.

Claim 48. (***Previously Presented***) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent having a compressed state and an expanded state, the stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected annular elements comprising struts, adjacent annular elements defining a flow path through the stent, at least a portion of the flow path of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state,
the tapered configuration defining a relative difference in diameter between a portion of the stent closer to the first end and a portion of the stent closer to the second end, at least some of the tapered configuration occurring between an annular element having a greatest tapered diameter and an annular element having a narrowest tapered diameter, at least some of the tapered configuration occurring along a portion of the longitudinal length where the struts of the annular elements are of substantially equal width;
the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility and have different diameters, the stent being cut from a tube.

Claim 49. (***Previously Presented***) The stent of claim 48 wherein the interconnected annular elements are connected by a plurality of connector elements, each connector element comprising at least one bent region.